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(58) Field of Search

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(54) Automatic telephone feature selector

(57) In a telephone system serving premises having a plurality of terminals 7 offering subscriber selectable features, there is provided an arrangement for changing the active features of the terminals 7 according to whether the associated subscribers are on or off the premises. The arrangement comprises a card reader 2 for generating signals identifying the subscribers and indicating an in or "out" status therefor, a memory 4 for storing data 5 indicating the features required by the respective subscribers in their "in" and "out" status, and a processor 8 responsive to the signals and the data 5 stored in the memory 4 to select the appropriate features in the telephone system as the subscribers enter and leave the premises.

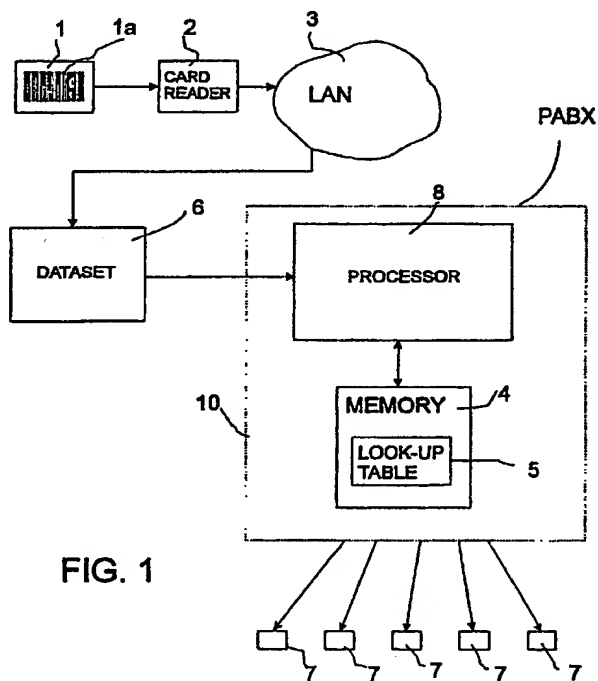


FIG. 1

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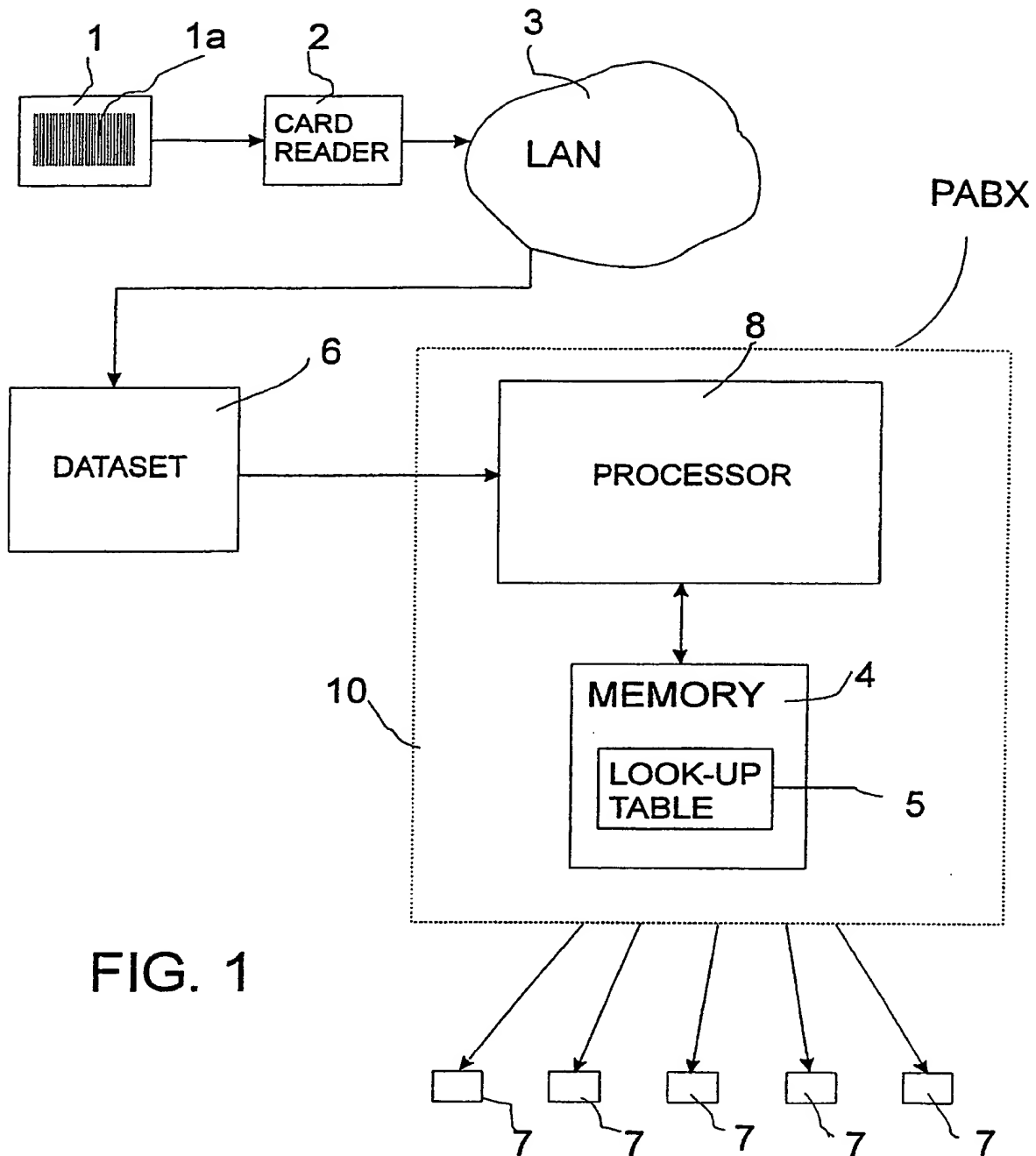


FIG. 1

Table A

Bar Code #	Phone #
100-968-7034569	1511
100-968-7034570	1522
100-968-7034571	1523
100-968-7034572	1524
NAME *****	*****

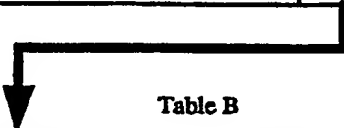


Table B

Phone #	Name	in/out	*****
1511	T. Rose	in	*****
1522	S. Boyle	out	*****
1523	S. O'Reilly	out	*****
1524	B. Fawltly	in	*****
*****			*****

Fig. 2

LEGEND

logical relationship
between database tables

DIAGRAM 2

Table B

Phone #	Name	in/out	COS - in	COS - out	Toll Resr - in	Toll Rest - out
1511	T. Rose	in	1	2	1	2
1522	S. Boyle	out	1	2	1	2
1523	S. O'Reilly	out	3	3	2	3
1524	B. Fawly	in	4	5	1	3
.....		

Table D

feature	COS #					
	1	2	3	4	5
call forward - busy	on	off			
call forward - no answer	on	off			
call forward - always	off	on			
speed call - display	on	off			
speed call	on	off			
call back	on	off			
.....			

Table E - 1

Toll Restriction - 1
no restrictions
(unrestricted)

Table E - 2

Toll Restriction - 2
1-900*
1-416*
(all long distance #'s with 416 area code & all 1-900 numbers are blocked)

Table E - 3

Toll Restriction - 3
1*
(all long distance numbers blocked)

LEGEND

logical relationship
between database tables

FIG. 3

DIAGRAM 3

Call Process - T. Rose

last number redialled - 1234

call fwd - always - IN: n/a
call fwd - always - OUT: 225-0716
call fwd - no answ - IN: 9987
call fwd - no answ - OUT: n/a
call fwd - busy - IN: 9987

call fwd active - YES

Call Process - S. Boyle

last number redialled - 1357

call fwd - always - IN: n/a
call fwd - always - OUT: 2790
call fwd - no answ - IN: 3498
call fwd - no answ - OUT: 225-0823
call fwd - busy - IN: 9543

call fwd active - YES

DIAGRAM 4 - Call Processes

FIG. 4

"Automatic Telephone Feature Selector"

This invention relates to a telephone system serving premises having a plurality of terminals, such as telephone terminals, offering subscriber selectable features.

A modern private automatic branch exchange (PABX) offers subscribers a choice of many features such as Forward No Answer, Call Forward Busy, Call Forward Always, or Toll Restriction. The features required by each subscriber obviously depend on whether the subscriber is "in" or "out". For example, when a subscriber is "in", he or she may wish to activate the Call Forward No Answer Feature, which forwards the call to a predetermined number, such as a secretary, after a predetermined number of rings, whereas when the subscriber is "out" he or she may wish to forward the call immediately to another number, for example a secretary, a home number or a voice mail box. When the subscriber is out, there is clearly no need for the caller to wait three (or more) rings before the call is forwarded.

Another feature often required by subscribers when they are "out" is Toll Restriction. A subscriber may need to make long distance telephone calls, but to prevent abuse ensure that long distance calls are blocked when that subscriber is not on the premises.

Presently, in order to change the active features the subscriber must remember to reprogram the telephone each time he or she leaves or enters the premises. Often the subscriber will forget to do this, and it can be a major inconvenience if the subscriber is in a rush.

An alternative known method is for the PABX to have a Night Service condition. At a certain time, for example 5:00 p.m. when the receptionist goes home, the PABX is switched over to the night condition and all telephones are put into the night service mode, which may involve different

features from those in the day mode. A disadvantage of this system is that many subscribers do not keep regular office hours, and consequently the desired features may not be appropriate at all times. For example, if a subscriber is out during the day a toll restriction feature would not be activated, leaving open the possibility of abuse by say a junior employee.

An object of the present invention is to alleviate the aforementioned disadvantages of the prior art.

According to the present invention there is provided in a telephone system serving premises having a plurality of terminals offering subscriber selectable features, an arrangement for changing the active features of the terminals according to whether the associated subscribers are on or off the premises, comprising means for logging said subscribers as they enter and leave the premises, said means generating signals identifying the subscribers and indicating an "in" or "out" status therefor, a memory for storing data indicating the features required by the respective subscribers in their "in" and "out" status, and means responsive to said signals and said data stored in said memory to select the appropriate features in said telephone system as the subscribers enter and leave the premises.

Preferably the logging means comprises portable personal identification devices to be carried by the subscribers and a reader for reading said devices as the subscribers enter and leave the premises.

A portable identification device may be, for example, a card or identity badge with a bar code or magnetic strip identifying the user. Many facilities already require employees to pass such devices through a reader as they

enter and leave the premises, and in this case signals generated for the central employee recording system can be used to change the selected telephone features for the subscriber in question. If desired, the arrangement can be
5 set up so that a certain employee, for example a secretary, leaves the premises her telephone is set up to change the features for all the people she serves. For example, any calls routed to her telephone could be directly routed to the appropriate ultimate subscriber. In other words, the
10 arrangement does not have to work on a one-on-one basis.

Alternatively, the invention finds application in a customer service environment. For example, using a touch-tone service a customer may be able to select one of three operators according to the desired service. When one of the
15 operators logs out, the arrangement can be set to direct her calls automatically to an automated attendant or other facility.

Conveniently the signals generated by the card reader are passed through a local area network to a processor
20 connected to the memory storing the features required by the subscribers in their in and out status. The memory can be, for example, a read/write programmable memory, a disk, or RAM.

In accordance with the invention, assuming the facility
25 already uses an employee badge check-in/check-out system, no additional hardware is required at the entry/exit point. Use is made of the existing signals generated to change the telephone features.

The invention is not uniquely applicable to a PABX.
30 For example, it can be applied to a key system, a wireless system, or a central office service such as Centrex, or a

LAN-based system, such as a telephone system running on a distributed LAN of PCs..

According to a further aspect, the invention provides a method of changing the active features of terminals on premises served by a telephone system offering subscriber selectable features according to whether the associated subscribers are on or off the premises, comprising: storing data indicating the features required by the subscribers when they are on and off the premises; generating signals indicating the entry to and departure from the premises of the subscribers; and changing the selected features for the respective subscribers in accordance with said signals and said stored data.

The invention will now be described in more detail, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:-

Figure 1 is a block diagram of a telephone system in accordance with the invention;

Figure 2 shows in more detail the tables stored in the memory;

Figure 3 illustrates the look-up tables incorporated in the PABX of an alternative embodiment of the invention; and

Figure 4 is a block diagram of stored call process information.

Referring now to Figure 1, the telephone system comprises a card 1 carrying a bar code 1a normally carried by an employee. Each time the employee enters or leaves the premises, he or she passes the card through card reader 2.

The card reader 2 is connected through a LAN 3, which acts as a transport vehicle, and a dataset 6, which is a hardware device that interprets the incoming signals from the LAN, to a processing unit 8 forming part of PABX 10, which records the arrivals and departures of employees in the memory 4 to which the processing unit is connected. The memory 4 also contains look-up table 5. The PABX is connected to subscriber telephone sets or terminals 7.

In operation, the card reader generates two signals, one identifying the employee and the other indicating whether the signal corresponds to a "badge in" or "badge out" condition. These signals are then interpreted by processor 8, which determines from look-up table 5 in memory 4 which feature(s) should be activated for the relevant subscriber set 7. These features depend on the identification of the employee and of course whether the signals represent a "badge in" or "badge out" condition.

More particularly, the processor 8, or dataset device driver, interprets the data received over the LAN 3 from card reader 2 and reads the look-up table 5 to obtain the subscriber's phone number. Look-up table 5 consists of two tables, A and B as shown in Figure 2.

As can be seen in Figure 2, look-up table A identifies the telephone number according to the bar code number on the card 1 (Figure 1). The processor 8 then updates table B to identify the subscriber in/out status as appropriate.

The central engine of a telephone system handles call processing. This engine is responsible for the handling of all calls and the execution of features. Call processing engine also stores dynamic information that exists on a per subscriber basis, such as last number redialled, and any

numbers to Call Forward to, and whether the Call Forwarding is currently active.

Figure 3 illustrates a database stored in memory within the PABX, which identifies the features or services programmed for each subscriber, who is allocated a COS (class of service) number in accordance with his chosen features. A simple way of implementing the present invention is to assign to each subscriber, unlike the prior art where a subscriber only has one COS number relating to the active status of his or her telephone, two COS numbers, one for when the subscriber is in the office and a different one for when the subscriber is out. By simply selecting the in or out COS number, the system can conveniently switch from the in and out classes of service.

For example, referring to Table B, it will be seen that employee T. Rose who has the extension number 1511, presently has an "in" status, and has a COS number of 1 when in and a COS number of 2 when out.

Referring to Table D, which is also stored in memory in the PABX 6, COS number 1 indicates Call Forward when busy, Call Forward when no answer, etc.

Table B also includes toll restrictions that are more particularly identified in Tables E-1 to E-3.

An example of the embodiment shown in Figures 3 and 4 will now be described in more detail with reference to Figures 3 and 4.

Example 1: There is a call for T. Rose who is not at this desk. Table B indicates that he is currently in the office and that his COS number is 1. COS 1 has call forward no answer programmed and the Call Process indicates that

call forwarding is activated. Therefore, after three rings the call is forwarded to another number. The number forwarded to has been stored by his Call Process, 9987.

Example 2: A call comes in for S. Boyle. Table B
5 indicates that he is out of the office and that his COS
number is 2. Since COS 2 indicates that call forward always
is available and the Call Process indicates the call forward
has been activated. Therefore, this call is immediately
10 redirected to a number that he also previously programmed,
2790. (in this example that number is his voice mail box)

Example 3: S. O'Reilly wants the same set of features
programmed on his phone whether he is in or out of the
office. To do this, he has COS 3 programmed both for when
is in and out of the office.

15 Example 4: S. Boyle does not want anyone to use or to
see any of the speed calls he has programmed, because they
are of a personal nature. For this reason, while he is out
of the office COS 2 is active, in which the speed call
feature is off, and the speed call display feature, used for
20 viewing speed calls, is also off.

The Toll Restriction tables prevent certain types of
calls from being made. This feature is useful for cutting
the costs for businesses. In the above tables, Table E-1
places no restrictions on outgoing calls, E-2 places some
25 restrictions, and E-3 restrict all long distance calls. The
Toll Restriction could also prevent any outgoing calls, if
desired.

Toll Restrictions is implemented in software as
follows: while dialing is taking place the Call processing
30 compares the digits that were just dialed with those in the

user's current Toll Restriction table. If a match is found the call is blocked, otherwise the call proceeds.

Similarly to the Class of Service, the employee may have different toll restrictions applied to his extension, depending upon whether he is in or out of the office, as shown in Table B. Let us look at an example:

Example 5: When B. Fawltly leaves the office he wants to prevent any long distance calls from being made from his number. However, while at work, he needs to be able to make long distance calls. From Table B, we can see that his Toll Restriction table is E-1 while he is in the office, placing no restrictions on his calls. While he is out of the office, Table E-3 takes effect, and all long distance calls are blocked.

It will be understood from the above description how the inventive system allows the active features of each subscriber's telephone to be changed when the subscriber enters or leaves the premises. Although this system has been described with reference to a card reader device, other means of changing the status of the system can be employed. For example, the system could be switched over when the subscriber logs on or off his computer.

Claims:-

1. In a telephone system serving premises having a plurality of terminals offering subscriber selectable features, an arrangement for changing the active features of the terminals according to whether the associated subscribers are on or off the premises, characterized in that it comprises means for generating signals identifying the subscribers and indicating an "in" or "out" status therefor, a memory for storing data indicating the features required by the respective subscribers in their "in" and "out" status, and processor means responsive to said signals and said data stored in said memory to select the appropriate features in said telephone system as the subscribers enter and leave the premises.

2. A telephone system as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said generating means comprise portable personal identification devices to be carried by the subscribers, and a reader for reading said devices as the subscribers enter and leave the premises.

3. A telephone system as claimed in claim 3, characterized in that said portable personnel identification devices comprise cards with identification data stored thereon.

4. A telephone system as claimed in claim 3, characterized in that said identification data stored is stored in a magnetic strip.

5. A telephone system as claimed in claim 3, characterized in that said identification data stored is stored in a bar code.

6. A telephone system as claimed in claim 2, characterized in that said reader is connected to said processor means through a local area network.

7. A telephone system as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said memory incorporates a look-up table containing the terminal number and preferences for the "in" and "out" status for each subscriber.

8. A telephone system as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said memory is included in said telephone system.

9. A method of changing the active features of terminals on premises served by a telephone system offering subscriber selectable features according to whether the associated subscribers are on or off the premises, characterized in that it comprises storing data indicating the features required by the subscribers when they are on and off the premises, generating signals indicating the entry to and departure from the premises of the subscribers, and changing the selected features for the respective subscribers in accordance with said signals and said stored data.

10. A method as claimed in claim 8, characterized in that said signals are transmitted over a local area network to a processor connected to a memory storing said data.

11. A telephone system substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

12. A method of changing the active features of terminals on premises served by a telephone system, the method being substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

Patents Act 1977
Examiner's report to the Comptroller under Section 17
(The Search report)

Application number
GB 9423673.4

Relevant Technical Fields

- (i) UK Cl (Ed.N) KF42
(ii) Int Cl (Ed.6) H04M

Search Examiner
AL STRAYTON

Date of completion of Search
19 JANUARY 1995

Databases (see below)

(i) UK Patent Office collections of GB, EP, WO and US patent specifications.

Documents considered relevant
following a search in respect of
Claims :-
All

(ii)

Categories of documents

- | | |
|---|---|
| X: Document indicating lack of novelty or of inventive step. | P: Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of the present application. |
| Y: Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of the same category. | E: Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of the present application. |
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Category	Identity of document and relevant passages	Relevant to claim(s)
X	EP 0346568 A2 (TELENORMA) Figure 1 and related description	1-10

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